

RISHMA DUNLOP

The Education of Girls

We learn to recite the Girl Guide promise:

*I promise, on my honour, to do my best:
To do my duty to God, the Queen, and my country,
To help other people at all times,
To obey the Guide Law.*

We learn the language of semaphore, how to
build campfires and lean-tos and latrines.
We earn badges, pitch tents, learn how to
use an axe and chop wood,
how to tie knots and how to survive
the wilderness.
We learn to *Be Prepared* and to *Lend a Hand*.

We learn the Guide Law.

*A Guide is obedient. You obey orders given you by those
in authority, willingly and quickly. Learn to understand that
orders are given for a reason, and must be carried out without question.*

*A Guide smiles and sings even under difficulty. You are
cheerful and willing even when things seem to be going wrong.*

A Guide is pure in thought, word and deed. You look for

*what is beautiful and good in everything, and try to become strong
enough to discard the ugly and unpleasant.*

We become capable girls, soldiers in our uniforms,
with our companies and patrols and salutes.
We learn to build nations and
at the close of the day,
we sing Taps, the soldiers' bugle call to
extinguish the lights.

*Day is done, gone the sun
From the hills, from the lake
From the sky
All is well, safely rest
God is nigh.*

And our mothers kept house,
did laundry and
cooking and ironing,
did volunteer work, refinished furniture,
watched *The Edge of Night* and *Another World*
took Valium when their lives did
not resemble the glamorous adventures of Rachel
and Mac Corey, had hysterectomies at forty.
At the close of every day, they had supper ready when
their husbands returned from the city, fresh and slick,
briefcases in hand, polished shoes passing
manicured lawns along the asphalt driveways.